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PENCE ANNOUNCES SUPPORT FOR SPENDING BILL

Washington, Dec 8, 2003 - Washington, D.C.— Congressman Mike Pence will vote today for the seven remaining appropriations bills that will fund the government next year. The \$820 billion bill includes a 0.59 percent across-the-board cut in nondefense spending while yielding \$2.8 billion in savings. Once the Senate passes the measure, the President is expected to sign the bill into law.

Pence's statement follows:

"Congress has a duty to complete the federal budget and fund the national government in a manner that reflects national priorities and fiscal discipline. While I regret that the final legislation in the appropriations process is taking the form of an omnibus bill, I will support the Omnibus Appropriations Act of FY2004 Conference Report as it funds vital national programs in the areas of law enforcement, education, social security and veterans' benefits.

"Although the bill is laden with many projects that would be a good argument for the line-item veto, this legislation actually conforms to the Budget Resolution adopted by the 108th Congress and includes a 0.59 percent across the board cut in nondefense spending, a measurable step toward fiscal discipline at the federal level.

"Finally, this legislation represents the culmination of a year of deliberation over vital national priorities and includes improvements in veterans benefits, educational choice scholarships for underprivileged children, funding for counter terrorism efforts in the FBI, a significant increase in abstinence education programs and a 6 percent increase in the Social Security Administration."

Highlights of the bill

Veterans

Funds benefits and compensation for our nation's veterans, and a \$2.9 billion increase over last year for Veterans Medical Care.

Education

Provides \$40 million, part of which will be used to expand school choice in the District of Columbia, including \$13 million to improve public education, \$13 million to expand charter

schools and \$14 million to provide opportunity scholarships for students in the District of Columbia.

Abstinence funding

Provides a significant increase over last year for abstinence education programs.

Israel

Provides \$2.2 billion for Foreign Military Financing for Israel and \$480 million for economic assistance to Israel.

Law Enforcement

Provides \$4.64 billion for the FBI, which will improve counter terrorism and counterintelligence efforts as well as violent crime, drugs, corporate fraud and cyber crime.

Provides \$2.16 for the Drug Enforcement Administration to fight drug crime.

Social Security

Provides a 6 percent increase to the Social Security Administration to accelerate the handling of Social Security benefits and disability claims.

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